



MAKING A POINT.—President Kennedy talks with group of 27 doctors who called to back his medical care plan. In rear is Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn. (AP Wirephoto)

Band of Doctors Backs Kennedy Medical Plan

Group Promises, in Defiance of AMA, to Be Missionaries for Old Age Program

BY ROBERT THOMPSON, Times Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—A band of doctors from across the nation rallied to President Kennedy's side in defiance of the American Medical Association Tuesday with a promise to do missionary work among their colleagues on behalf of his old age medical care program.

Twenty-seven physicians—representing a committee of 43—gathered in the White House rose garden to assure the President that they regard the Social Security system as "the most practical and sound method of financing health benefits for the great majority of the aged."

Mostly Educators

In reply, Mr. Kennedy said: "I am hopeful that this support for this concept of medical care for the aged through Social Security will cause other doctors, others who are concerned about the health of our people, to examine and re-examine their position."

Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn, medical director of the Rip Van Winkle Clinic in Hudson, N.Y., was leader of the group. He told newsmen that 75% of the doctors joining in support of Mr. Kennedy are members of the AMA. The AMA is vehemently opposed to the administration

plan sponsored in Congress by Sen. Clinton Anderson (D-N.M.) and Rep. Cecil King (D-Los Angeles).

Among those joining in the statement of support were five Californians—Dr. Robert H. Alway, dean of the Stanford University School of Medicine; Dr. Thomas Brem, professor of medicine at USC; Dr. Arthur Kornberg, professor and executive head of the department of biochemistry at Stanford; Dr. Phillip R. Lee, of the department of internal medicine at the Palo Alto Clinic, and Dr. Daniel R. Mischell, chief gynecologist at Beverly Hills Doctors Hospital. All except Brem attended Tuesday's ceremony at the White House.

Affects Young Parents

Although the group included some practicing physicians, most of those who pledged their support to the President were educators. One was Dr. Benjamin Spock, of Western Reserve University, the famed authority on child health and development.

Spock told newsmen that the President's old age medical plan "certainly affects young parents, of the kind I advise, because if grandfa-

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DOCTORS SUPPORT HEALTH CARE PLAN

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then gets seriously ill, the young parents must support him."

In their statement to Mr. Kennedy, the doctors said: "Through modern scientific achievements much has been done to prolong the life potential of the population. Concurrently, medical care has become more costly.

"Old age is a period of need for increased medical care and it is most frequently accompanied by diminishing resources to pay for such care. Today, all but a relative few still live under the constant fear that unpredictable medical disaster may strike and destroy the financial security of their later years."

Through a medical care plan supported by increased Social Security taxes, said the doctors, America's physicians "will be better able to maintain their commitment to provide high quality care and excellence of standards while preserving independence of professional judgment, and . . . the aged will be better able to enjoy with dignity the best modern medical care."

Cites Responsibility

Mr. Kennedy told the doctors he was hopeful their support "will stimulate careful thought by doctors across the country, that more and more of them will come to realize that this is really the best way to deal with a very pressing national emergency."

By backing his plan, he said, the physicians "are helping to meet the very great responsibility which the medical profession faces to care for our citizens."

After the public ceremony, Mr. Kennedy chatted informally with the doctors and drew a spontaneous

laugh from them when he said their participation in the fight with the AMA "would raise the level of debate."

The doctors later lunched with Anderson and King.

Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Ribicoff participated in the rose garden ceremony and later told reporters that the administration was "proud to have men of this stature" seeking passage of the legislation.

He also said there "is a substantial number of doctors who do not agree with the AMA" on medical care plan.